

DRAFT

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U.S. CONT. #

D.I. HQ USAF

NIE-30: SOVIET CAPABILITIES TO INTERFERE WITH US DELIVERY
OF ATOMIC WEAPONS TO TARGETS IN THE USSR

1. Soviet capabilities to interfere with the delivery of atomic bombs by U. S. forces to targets within the Soviet Union depend upon the effectiveness of two major Soviet military organizations -- the Air Defense Force, and the Long Range Air Force -- and upon the effectiveness of the para-military Communist underground. Fighter aircraft and antiaircraft artillery units of the Air Defense Force would attempt to attack U. S. bombers once they penetrate Soviet-controlled territory. The Long Range Air Force, aided on the ground in the United States and overseas base areas by Communist saboteurs and other agents, possibly would attempt to blunt the American atomic retaliation by attacks on Strategic Air Command bases and other comparable targets before and while the United States launches its counter-offensive against the Soviet Union.

2. The Soviet Union possesses in quantity excellent day interceptor aircraft for fighter defense, but at present is handicapped materially in the bomber interception field by lack of effective ground control interception radars and efficient all-weather interceptor aircraft. A good all-weather interceptor may be introduced in 1952 and technical difficulties with ground control interception radars could be largely overcome by that time. By 1952, the Soviet Union should have reached a state of training and equipment sufficient to provide a moderately effective fighter defense system, but one still having limited capabilities in bad weather and against bombers operating at altitudes as high as 40,000 feet.

3. Continuously pointed antiaircraft fire should not be expected above 30,000 feet, but the possibility of operational use of unguided rockets must be recognized.

4. Even if the Soviet air defenses were considerably better than current estimates would indicate, it is estimated that they would not be capable of preventing execution of the U. S. atomic offensive.

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Note (1 May 51) Reviewer 6514

5. The Soviet Union has and will continue to have the capability in aircraft and trained crews to enable it to launch against North America and the United Kingdom the full stockpile of atomic bombs that are and will become available. In the next few years the strategic bombing capability of the Soviet Long Range Air Force will increase substantially, particularly in view of the growing atomic bomb stockpile and the increasing numbers of conventional medium bombers. Further improvement in effectiveness of the Soviet Long Range Force may be anticipated with expected introduction of jet medium bombers in 1952 and possibly heavy bombers in 1953, although the problems connected with high speed bombing and navigation probably will not be fully solved by the Soviets by that time.

6. In view of the threat which an American retaliatory atomic offensive would pose to the security of the Soviet Union in the event of major hostilities, it should be expected that blunting this atomic offensive at the source -- before it could be launched -- would be a high priority task of the Soviet Long Range Air Force. If surprise could be achieved, this probably would warrant expenditure of at least a portion of the stockpile of Soviet atomic bombs against Strategic Air Command bases in the United States and against overseas bases which cannot be reached by Soviet light bombers or neutralized by saboteurs.

7. It can be expected that such air attacks would be coordinated carefully with activities of Communist subversive forces conducting operations against Strategic Air Command bases, with the intention of preventing or impeding the execution of a retaliatory atomic offensive against the Soviet Union.

8. The progress now being made in the intelligence field and with the radar warning screen reduces to a reasonable degree the chances that the Soviet Union would achieve the complete surprise in air attacks against the United States that it would wish.

9. Tightened security precautions and steadily improving U. S. counter-intelligence capabilities are strengthening protection against clandestine attack and sabotage. Continued tightening of security measures will enhance the likelihood that this threat to U. S. security can be controlled.

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